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Georgia Southern University

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# Georgia Southern University



Women's Golf Preview: Eagles Start the Spring in Texas  
The Eagles tee it up Monday at the Texas State Invitational.  
Marc Gignac  
Women's Golf  
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**STATESBORO** – The Georgia Southern women's golf team will open the spring campaign at the Texas State Invitational, a 54-hole event at Plum Creek Golf Club Feb. 12-13.

Georgia Southern had three freshmen start in all five tournaments in the fall, and the Eagles had to adapt and adjust to the environment of tournament college golf.

"It took the fall to calm some nerves, figure out how everybody reacts in a tournament situation and how they need to be practicing and what kinds of things relate best to them out on the golf course," said Georgia Southern third-year coach [Emily Kuhfeld](#). "With that now under our belt, it's been great, and these few weeks of practice have gone very smoothly."

When the fall season ended, the team met with the coaching staff and developed a new process for practice.

"We've set up a structure where they get to choose with our feedback what they want to practice on and then certain other things that we have all agreed are worth spending time on," said Kuhfeld. "It's been really effective and efficient, and we've seen that in qualifying performances, which is very encouraging to see. It's also given us a renewed sense of energy and commitment for this semester and feeling a little bit more settled and having ownership have their own games."

The next step for the young Eagles will be finding the balance between understanding every shot matters while also playing free and loose. One exercise regarding this point of emphasis was putting the players out for a qualifying round and then removing their scorecards after nine holes. The coaching staff noticed how tight and anxious the Eagles played at the beginning on how much freedom they played with after the scorecards were removed.

"We saw these great shots and great putts and we were like, 'what happened? I just took a piece of paper from your hand,'" said Kuhfeld. "We want them to play loose and free and help them realize that you don't play your best when you are tense and stressed and anxious and worried about results. The mindset we need to emulate is to stop thinking about results and just go and play."

The spring schedule will also challenge the Eagles to play tournaments with blinders on, so to speak.

"We have a good mix of strengths of fields so they will get exposed to some of the best teams in the country, and we're trying to continue to teach them you play your own game no matter who you are against and that's all you can control," said Kuhfeld.

Junior [Ansley Bowman](#), sophomores [Ella Ofstedahl](#) and [Julianna Collett](#), and freshmen [Natalie Petersen](#) and [Sarah Noonan](#) will be in the lineup this week.

Petersen leads the team with a 76.85 scoring average and tied for second at the Terrier Intercollegiate, while Ofstedahl capped the season with consecutive top-20 outings and posted a 78.21 scoring average. Bowman struggled with an injury but is healthy to start the spring. Even with the injury, the junior managed to scratch out a 78.46 scoring average and tied for 12th at the Terrier.

Noonan gets the start in the spring opener, and her highlight of the fall was tying for seventh in the Terrier Intercollegiate. Collett has been out with injury for the last year and a half and makes her return for the first time since the fall of 2016.

"She has had a lot of great junior golf experiences and started out great before the injury, but I think her ball striking is better now than it was before the injury," said Kuhfeld. "She has been working really hard, and she's excited to get back."

The Texas tournament is the first of five this spring before the Eagles travel down to Sandestin, Fla., for the Sun Belt Championship. This year's championship will be at the Raven Golf Club, the site of the 2016 championship, where the Eagles placed fourth in the program's first year of existence. The Raven Club features a lot of water, and players need to be accurate off the tee.

"We have some really good drivers of the golf ball, and that's kind of a natural strength of our team so that's encouraging," said Kuhfeld. "I think the way we are progressing, we are going to be playing our best golf at that point. We've got some really good players, and if they click at the same time, we're capable of just about anything."

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